

SELECTING A HOME IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTOR

First, check to see if the contractor is licensed by the Maryland Home Improvement Commission (410 230-6309). All home-improvement contractors and salesmen in Maryland are required to be licensed, even for minor jobs. Then get several estimates. Compare proposals and prices. Remember that, in terms of quality of workmanship, the lowest price may not be the best deal. Call the Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DCA)(240 777-3636) and the Better Business Bureau (202 393-8000) for complaint records and general information. Get references from the contractors you are considering. Check with previous customers to find out: 1) whether their work was done on time, 2) whether it was satisfactory, and 3) whether the contractor was responsive to any problems and complaints. Finally, when you do choose a contractor, insist on a written, detailed contract. A written contract is required by law, and details; such as brand names, completion dates, etc.; may help if problems arise. You can also call DCA and request a copy of the "Guide to Home Improvements" booklet.

And Finally....

Following major storm events and other natural disasters, DPS inspectors conduct damage assessments and provide Damage Reports that specify the need for plans, permits, or structural evaluations for properties with major damage. If you believe that your home sustained major damage as the result of a major storm event or natural disaster, you may request an inspection or obtain a copy of a Damage Report by calling 240 777-6259.

Depending on the extent of the damage to your home, DPS may require you to obtain the services of a structural engineer to determine whether or not the habitability of your home has been seriously compromised. Structural damage may be hidden in a building component (e.g., a roof, wall, or floor). DPS inspectors are trained to assess the dynamics of structural injury to determine whether or not engineering evaluation is needed.

Information about obtaining permits can be found at the DPS website:
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/permittingservices.

Montgomery County
Department of Permitting Services

255 Rockville Pike, Second Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850-4166

Phone: 240-777-6259
TTY: 240-777-6256

dps@montgomerycountymd.gov

AFTER THE STORM

A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO HOME REPAIRS

Montgomery County
Department of Permitting
Services



Assessing Damage to Buildings

Minor Repairs: This category of repair encompasses damage to siding, shingles, windows, carpeting, wall-board, paint, trim, and other exterior/interior building features. DPS recommends that property owners seek out licensed professional contractors to do damage assessment and repair (See “Selecting a Home Improvement Contractor.”). Building permits are not required for minor repairs.

Major Repairs: This category of repair encompasses damage to structural elements of a building, such as roofs, walls, floors, and beams, and damage to non-structural elements that exceeds 25% of the building valuation (fair market value). Repairs of this kind typically involve such things as replacing roofs rafters/trusses, replacing floor joists, replacing wall sections, or reconstructing substantial portions of a building. Building permits are required for major repairs.

Assessing Damage to Electrical Systems

Minor Repairs: This category of repair encompasses damage to lighting fixtures, home appliances, electrical cords, and damage to electrical wiring caused by flooding. DPS recommends that property owners seek out reputable repair shops or licensed Montgomery County Electrical Contractors to do damage assessment and repair (See “Selecting a Home Improvement Contractor.”). Electrical permits are generally not required for minor repairs.

Major Repairs: This category of repair encompasses damage to general-lighting and convenience circuits, service-entrance panels, sub-panels, circuit boxes, or any damage to electrical-supply components from the meter into the house. Repairs of this kind typically involve such things as replacing panels, circuit boxes, and wiring. Electrical permits are required for major repairs.

Assessing Damage to Mechanical Systems

Minor Repairs: This category of repair encompasses insubstantial damage to mechanical appliances/equipment/air-supply systems. Repairs of this kind typically involve such things as replacing fans or patching ductwork. DPS recommends that property owners seek out reputable repair shops or licensed professional contractors to do damage assessment and repair (See “Selecting a Home Improvement Contractor.”). Mechanical permits are not required for minor repairs.

Major Repairs: This category of repair encompasses substantial damage to heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems in the home. Repairs of this kind typically involve such things as replacing heat pumps, air-conditioning compressors, and air-supply systems. Mechanical permits are required for major repairs.